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PAKISTAN: FRIEND OR FOE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM?

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my assessment and advice on the issue of Pakistan's support for terrorist and extremist forces. Pakistani proxies pose a severe threat to coalition and Afghan forces and civilians.

Indeed, Pakistani policy is the principal cause of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

More broadly, Pakistan's use of extremist and terrorist proxies – including to threaten India -- is a significant contributor to the global menace of Islamic extremism. It must be confronted if we are to succeed in defeating terrorism and extremism around the world.

Background

Since the overthrow of the Taliban regime after 9/11, Pakistan has been playing a perfidious and dangerous double game. It has portrayed itself as a U.S. partner, yet supports the Taliban and the al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network.

Since 2005, the Taliban and Haqqani network have regrouped in Pakistan and waged a devastating insurgency against U.S. and Afghan forces.

Poor governance by the Afghan government is a factor in Kabul's inability to defeat the insurgents. But the Taliban's resilience can be attributed above all to the strategic decision of the Pakistani military and intelligence services to provide sanctuary and support to these groups.

Pakistan's Goals

Pakistan views the Taliban as an effective proxy to ensure Pakistani dominance over Afghanistan.

Islamabad also believes that continuing the war in Afghanistan will lead to a U.S. withdrawal, which would change the balance of power against the current government and in favor of its proxies.

Ultimately, Pakistan seeks the overthrow of the current government in Afghanistan because it is not compliant.

Declaratory Policy vs. Actual Policy

Pakistan understands that its double-game is risky, but it believes that the risk is manageable. Pakistani leaders reason that they can continue to receive U.S. assistance and avoid international isolation even if they support the Taliban and Haqqani network. They have seen little evidence that Washington will force it to choose between U.S. support and its alliance with the Taliban.

Every country has a gap between its declaratory policy and its actual policy. In the case of Pakistan, the gap is huge. Until recently, Pakistani leaders even denied that there were Taliban in their country!

Pakistan believes that they can outmaneuver and outwait us. They are adept at offering tactical gestures that make it appear they are being helpful, which they calculate will make it more difficult for the U.S. to take a hardline stance.

I have first-hand experience in this regard. As I document in my recently published memoir—*The Envoy*-- the President asked me in 2005 to visit Pakistani dictator General Pervez Musharraf and raise the issue of the Taliban sanctuaries. When I asked Gen. Musharraf why Pakistan was sponsoring the Taliban, he denied that there were any Taliban in Pakistan. He refused to acknowledge that the leadership of the Taliban were residing in Quetta or contend with the fact that its ruling Council bore the name of the capital of Baluchistan. Musharraf instead insisted that I provide him with the names and phone numbers of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Years later, when he was no longer his country's leader, he boasted to the world of his country's support for the extremist group.

Recommendations

The May 21 killing of Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in a U.S. drone strike has created a golden hour to confront Pakistan. Washington can force Islamabad to make a choice: U.S. aid and international support or a continued relationship with the Haqqani network and irreconcilable Taliban.

Catalyzing a decisive effect on Pakistani policy, however, will require the U.S. to escalate pressure on Islamabad. Otherwise the opportunity will dissipate.

For Islamabad to break with the Haqqani network and the Taliban, the Pakistani leadership needs to see that continued support for the insurgency will come at a high price.

Escalating drone strikes against Haqqani and irreconcilable Taliban leaders would deliver that message, but drone strikes alone will not be enough without corresponding political and financial pressure.

On the financial side, Pakistan has been an enormous beneficiary of international support -- specifically from Coalition support funds, bilateral assistance, and multilateral assistance from the IMF and World Bank. In addition to cutting off this assistance, Washington should warn Pakistan that it will face escalating

financial sanctions—like those once imposed on Iran—unless it facilitates reconciliation talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

As an initial step, the U.S. can impose financial and travel restrictions on senior Pakistani officials known to be complicit in the insurgency, and freeze funds in U.S. banks belonging to Pakistani entities—both military and corporate—involved in financing the Taliban.

Politically, Pakistan cannot be a member in good standing of the international community so long as its agencies or military services aggress against Afghanistan.

Pakistan is currently designated by the United States as a “major non-NATO ally.” This status is wholly inappropriate. Pakistan’s current policy and conduct would better merit its inclusion on the State Department’s list of state-sponsors of terrorism.

The U.N. Security Council is an appropriate venue in which to raise Pakistan’s aggression against Afghanistan. To help secure international support for a U.S.-Afghan-sponsored resolution condemning Pakistan, the U.S. should declassify and broadcast information indicating Pakistani support for the insurgency and its narcotics trafficking.

Action at the Security Council would also provide the United States to ask China, one of Pakistan's staunchest allies, whether it wants to be saddled with another North Korea – a rogue, isolated state surviving on Beijing's dole.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your consideration on this issue. I look forward to your questions.